

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1           1.       A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:  
2                   presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel  
3 segments;  
4                   presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments;  
5                   deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue  
6 symbol; and  
7                   repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and  
8 deactivating the active reel segments associated with the discontinue symbols, until a  
9 predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1           2.       The method as in Claim 1, wherein presenting a mechanical reel configuration  
2 comprising a plurality of active reel segments comprises presenting the active reel segments  
3 in a bonus mode of play in response to presentation of a symbol combination during a  
4 standard mode of play that invokes the bonus mode of play.

1           3.       The method as in Claim 2, wherein a bonus symbol set comprising the  
2 symbols presented in each of the active reel segments during the bonus mode of play is  
3 different than a standard symbol set comprising standard symbols presented in the  
4 mechanical reel configuration during the standard mode of play.

1           4.       The method as in Claim 1, further comprising at least partially randomly  
2 selecting which symbol is to be presented in each of the active reel segments.

1           5.       The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which  
2 symbol is to be presented comprises associating a reel strip having a predetermined symbol  
3 set to each of the active reel segments.

1           6.       The method as in Claim 5, wherein associating a reel strip having a  
2 predetermined symbol set to each of the active reel segments comprises associating a  
3 different reel strip to each of the active reel segments.

1           7.       The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which  
2 symbol is to be presented comprises associating a predetermined symbol set to each of the  
3 active reel segments.

1           8.       The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which  
2 symbol is to be presented comprises associating a predetermined symbol set to a plurality of  
3 the active reel segments.

1           9.       The method as in Claim 1, wherein the active reel segments that are  
2 deactivated by being associated with a discontinue symbol are de-emphasized to be  
3 distinguished from the active reel segments.

1           10.      The method as in Claim 9, further comprising retaining the discontinue  
2 symbol in each of the active reel segments that are deactivated, thereby distinguishing the  
3 deactivated reel segments from the active reel segments.

1           11.      The method as in Claim 1, wherein presenting symbols in each of the active  
2 reel segments comprises presenting continue symbols in one or more of the active reel  
3 segments, wherein the continue symbols direct its respective one of the active reel segments  
4 to remain active.

1           12.      The method as in Claim 11, further comprising associating a credit award with  
2 one or more of the continue symbols.

1           13.      The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a positive credit award having an additive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1           14.      The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a null credit award having no positive or negative effect on an accumulated credit  
3 total.

1           15.     The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a negative credit award having a subtractive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1           16.     The method as in Claim 1, further comprising associating a credit award with  
2 one or more of the discontinue symbols.

1           17.     The method as in Claim 17, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a positive credit award having an additive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1           18.     The method as in Claim 16, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a null credit award having no positive or negative effect on an accumulated credit  
3 total.

1           19.     The method as in Claim 16, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a negative credit award having a subtractive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1           20.     The method as in Claim 1, further comprising deactivating a predetermined  
2 plurality of the active display segments in response to deactivation of one of the active reel  
3 segments that is associated with a discontinue symbol.

1           21.     The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols comprises  
2 automatically repeating presenting symbols and deactivating the active reel segments until all  
3 of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1           22.     The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols comprises  
2 providing a user interface to allow a participant to initiate each repeated presentation of  
3 symbols until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1           23.     The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols and  
2 deactivating the active reel segments until a predetermined number of the active reel  
3 segments have been deactivated comprises deactivating the active reel segments until all of  
4 the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1           24.     A casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard  
2 mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:  
3                 a video screen to present a display grid having a plurality of display cells;  
4                 a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode  
5 of operation; and  
6                 a processor configured to identify a predetermined symbol combination  
7 occurring on the display grid during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus  
8 mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present symbols via  
9 a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel  
10 strips, to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and to repeat the random  
11 presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols  
12 until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

1           25.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor comprises  
2 a random number generator configured to randomly select the symbols for presentation via  
3 the reels.

1           26.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the user interface  
2 comprises a user interface mechanism to allow the player to initiate each repetition of the  
3 random presentation of symbols.

1           27.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, further comprising a bonus  
2 payout bar to present payout subtotals for each of the reels associated with the bonus mode of  
3 operation.

1           28.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor is further  
2 configured to automatically repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of  
3 the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the active display cells have  
4 been deactivated without player intervention.

1           29.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2 apparatus comprises a slot machine, and the standard mode of operation of the slot machine  
3 is a slot game.

1           30.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2 apparatus comprises a video poker machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video  
3 poker machine is a poker game.

1           31.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2 apparatus comprises a video bingo machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video  
3 bingo machine is a bingo game.

1           32.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2 apparatus comprises a video keno machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video  
3 keno machine is a keno game.

1           33.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor is  
2 configured to repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels  
3 associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the reels have been deactivated.

1           34.     A casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard  
2 mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:  
3                   a first reel configuration to display a plurality of display cells;  
4                   a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode  
5 of operation; and  
6                   a processor configured to identify a predetermined symbol combination  
7 occurring on the first reel configuration during the standard mode of operation to activate the  
8 bonus mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present  
9 symbols via a second reel configuration which includes one or more reels having  
10 corresponding reel strips, to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and to

11 repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the  
12 discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

1           35.     A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:  
2                   presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;  
3                   presenting symbols in each of the active display segments;  
4                   deactivating the active display segments that are associated with a discontinue  
5 symbol; and  
6                   repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and  
7 deactivating the active display segments associated with the discontinue symbols, until a  
8 predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated.